

What is IVIG?

Intravenous immune globulin (IVIG) is made from human plasma which is the liquid part of blood. This product comes from blood donors. IVIG contains special proteins called antibodies which can help fight infections. IVIG is also used to treat some diseases that can cause the body to attack its own tissues or organs.

Why am I getting IVIG?

IVIG is often used to replace antibodies in patients who have lower than normal levels. It can also be used to treat some other medical conditions. Your doctor will explain why you are receiving IVIG.

How is IVIG given?

IVIG is given through a vein in your arm. It is given slowly over several hours. In most cases the treatment will be in a hospital daycare clinic. The dose and number of treatments will depend on your height, weight, and medical condition.

What should I tell my doctor before starting IVIG treatment?

Allergies: Tell your doctor if you have any allergies including foods, preservatives or dyes. Also, tell your doctor if you have had previous allergic reactions to immune globulins.

Blood clots: There is a rare chance that a blood clot could form in a blood vessel. If you have any history of blood clots, please let your doctor know.

Breastfeeding: It is not known whether IVIG passes into breast milk. Mothers who are receiving IVIG and wish to breastfeed should talk about this with their doctor.

Other medicines: Discuss with your nurse and doctor any medications or treatments you are currently receiving in case they affect your response to IVIG.

Vaccinations: Tell your doctor or nurse if you recently had, or are going to have, a live virus vaccine.

Why do I get different brands of IVIG?

There are several brands of IVIG approved for use in Canada. Canadian Blood Services has contracts with different manufacturers. Inventory at the hospital will vary depending on what Canadian Blood Services sends to them. All brands of IVIG are considered equally effective as treatments and there has been no differences documented between manufacturers.

How much does IVIG treatment cost?

IVIG treatment is expensive. For adults, the usual cost for one treatment can range from \$1,000–\$10,000. Treatments that meet the British Columbia provincial guidelines for IVIG use and which have been approved in advance by designated medical personnel are covered by the BC provincial government.

Are there risks with this blood product?

IVIG is considered one of the safer blood products with a low risk of spreading disease. Human donors are carefully tested before they can donate blood. During the manufacturing process, IVIG is treated to kill the HIV, Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C viruses.

Will I have side effects from the IVIG?

Side effects are not uncommon, but these tend to be mild and short-lived. The most common side effects are:

- Headache
- Muscle pain
- Feeling hot
- Chills
- Backache
- Nausea/vomiting

If you experience any of these side effects during the transfusion, inform your nurse. They may be able to reduce the side effects by slowing down the rate of the infusion and using medication to relieve the symptoms.

If you experience side effects after discharge, please report them using the **Heading Home after a Transfusion** form given to you when you are discharged.

Serious reactions are rare but if you experience any of the following symptoms, please seek immediate care at your nearest emergency department.

- Severe headache, eye pain, extreme drowsiness
- Facial and/or tongue swelling
- Severe shortness of breath, chest tightness
- Red or brown urine
- Feeling unusually tired
- Yellow skin or eye color